

Another Rule In Health Law Is Scaled Back

No Penalties for People Who Lost Coverage

By **ROBERT PEAR**

WASHINGTON — Millions of people facing the cancellation of health insurance policies will be allowed to buy catastrophic coverage and will be exempt from penalties if they go without insurance next year, the White House said Thursday night.

Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, disclosed the sudden policy shift in a letter to Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, and five other senators.

It was another effort by President Obama to cushion the impact of the health care law and minimize political damage to himself and Democrats in Congress who adopted the law in 2010 over solid Republican opposition.

In recent weeks, insurers have told many people that their insurance policies were being canceled because they did not comply with the minimum coverage requirements of the law. Insurers usually offer to replace the coverage with new policies that do comply, providing more benefits at higher cost.

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a bulletin on Thursday advising consumers, “If you have been notified that your individual market policy will not be renewed, you will be eligible for a hardship exemption and will be able to enroll in catastrophic coverage.”

The help for people with canceled policies was offered late Thursday, just four days before the deadline for people to sign up for coverage that starts on Jan. 1.

Ms. Sebelius said the goal was to ensure “the smoothest possible transition” for people seeking new coverage after cancellation of their policies.

Mr. Obama initially tried to address a furor over the cancella-

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RUTH FREMSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Debrah Reid, who has breast cancer, was assisted by ushers when she felt sick during a service at her church in Memphis.

Tackling a Racial Gap in Breast Cancer Survival

By **TARA PARKER-POPE**

MEMPHIS — After her doctor told her two months ago that she had breast cancer, Debrah Reid, a 58-year-old dance teacher, drove straight to a funeral home. She began planning a burial with the funeral director and his wife, even requesting a pink coffin.

Sensing something was amiss, the funeral director, Edmund Ford, paused. “Who is this for?” he asked. Ms. Reid replied quietly, “It’s for me.”

Aghast, Mr. Ford’s wife, Myrna, quickly put a stop to the purchase. “Get on out of here,” she said, urging Ms. Reid to return to her doctor and seek treatment. Despondent, Ms. Reid instead headed to her church to talk to her pastor.

“I was just going to sit down and die,” she says.

THE CANCER DIVIDE
A Deadly Disparity

Like many other African-American women in Memphis and around the country, Ms. Reid learned about her breast cancer after it had already reached an advanced stage, making it difficult to treat and reducing her odds of survival. Her story reflects one of the most troubling disparities in American health care. Despite 20 years of pink ribbon awareness campaigns and numerous advances in medical treatment that have sharply improved survival rates for women with breast cancer in the United States, the vast majority of those gains have largely bypassed black women.

The cancer divide between

black women and white women in the United States is as entrenched as it is startling. In the 1980s, breast cancer survival rates for the two were nearly identical. But since 1991, as improvements in screening and treatment came into use, the gap has widened, with no signs of abating. Although breast cancer is diagnosed in far more white women, black women are far more likely to die of the disease.

And Memphis is the deadliest major American city for African-American women with breast cancer. Black women with the disease here are more than twice as likely to die of it than white women.

“The big change in the 1990s was advances in care that were widely available in early detection and treatment,” said Steven

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S.E.C. Tension As It Examined Mortgage Cases

By **PETER EAVIS**
and **BEN PROTESS**

Wall Street’s top regulator, sifting through the wreckage of the mortgage crisis, was weighing enforcement actions last year against several large financial companies.

But then the regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission, decided in some prominent cases to quietly back down.

After many months of investigating the roles of Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo and Standard & Poor’s in troubled mortgage securities — and even warning the companies that enforcement actions were possible — the S.E.C. closed or shelved these cases and at least two others.

While these outcomes have been known, the reasoning behind the decisions and the contentious way they divided camps within the agency illuminates how difficult choices are made in-

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Sentences of 8 Are Commuted In Crack Cases

By **CHARLIE SAVAGE**

WASHINGTON — President Obama, expanding his push to curtail severe penalties in drug cases, on Thursday commuted the sentences of eight federal inmates who were convicted of crack cocaine offenses. Each inmate has been imprisoned for at least 15 years, and six were sentenced to life in prison.

It was the first time retroactive relief was provided to a group of inmates who would most likely have received significantly shorter terms if they had been sentenced under current drug laws, sentencing rules and charging policies. Most will be released in 120 days. The commutations opened a major new front in the administration’s efforts to curb soaring taxpayer spending on prisons and to help correct what it has portrayed as inequality in the justice system.

In a statement, Mr. Obama said that each of the eight men and

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AL GOLDSTEIN, 1936-2013

A Publisher Who Took the Romance Out of Sex

By **ANDY NEWMAN**

Al Goldstein, the scabrous publisher whose Screw magazine pushed hard-core pornography into the cultural mainstream, died on Thursday at a nursing home in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. He was 77.

The cause was believed to be renal failure, his lawyer, Charles C. DeStefano, said.

Mr. Goldstein did not invent the dirty magazine, but he was the first to present it to a wide audience without the slightest pretense of classiness or subtlety. Sex as depicted in Screw was seldom pretty, romantic or even particularly sexy. It was, primarily, a business, with consumers and suppliers like any other.

The manifesto in Screw’s debut issue in 1968 was succinct. “We promise never to ink out a pubic hair or chalk out an organ,” it read. “We will apologize for nothing. We will uncover the entire world of sex. We will be the Consumer Reports of sex.”

Mr. Goldstein, who lived to shock and offend and was arrested more than a dozen times



Al Goldstein in 1981. He started Screw magazine in 1968.



EDDIE HAUSNER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

on obscenity charges, stuck around long enough for social mores and technology to overtake him. By the time his company went bankrupt in 2003, he was no longer a force in the \$10-billion-a-year industry he pioneered. But for better or worse, his influence was undeniable.

“He clearly coarsened Ameri-

can sensibilities,” Alan M. Dershowitz, the civil liberties advocate and Mr. Goldstein’s sometime lawyer, said in 2004.

“Hefner did it with taste,” Mr. Dershowitz added, referring to Hugh Hefner, the founder and publisher of Playboy, which predated Screw by 15 years. “Gold-

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Growing Corruption Inquiry Hits Close to Turkish Leader

This article is by **Tim Arango**, **Sebnem Arsu** and **Ceylan Yeginsu**.

ISTANBUL — In building his political career, Turkey’s powerful and charismatic prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, relied heavily on the support of a Sufi mystic preacher whose base of operations is now in Pennsylvania.

The two combined forces in a battle with the country’s secular military elite, sending them back to the barracks in recent years and establishing Turkey as a successful example of a moderate, democratic Islamic government.

Now a corruption scandal not only threatens Mr. Erdogan’s rule but has exposed a deepening rift between the prime minister

Late Edition

Today, some sun then clouds, breezy, milder, high 50. **Tonight**, mostly cloudy, a shower, foggy areas, low 44. **Tomorrow**, a shower, high 55. Weather map, Page B15.

PUTIN SAYS RIVAL, A JAILED TYCOON, COULD BE FREED

A SURPRISING REVERSAL

Move Comes as Russia Gets Set to Host the Winter Olympics

By **STEVEN LEE MYERS**
and **DAVID M. HERSZENHORN**

MOSCOW — President Vladimir V. Putin said on Thursday that Russia could soon free its most famous prisoner, Mikhail B. Khodorkovsky, the former chief executive of Yukos Oil, whose arrest and jailing 10 years ago signaled an authoritarian turn in the nation’s modern history.

The release of Mr. Khodorkovsky, once Russia’s richest man and an aspiring political rival, would be an unexpected and striking reversal for Mr. Putin. For a decade, he has shown no signs of sympathy, let alone mercy, as the authorities dismantled Mr. Khodorkovsky’s company and pursued criminal charges — even as recently as this month — that seemed intended to keep him in prison for life.

Mr. Putin, who commands singular political authority here, now appears to have the confidence to risk freeing a man who even in prison has persisted as one of his harshest political critics and who still has the will and financial resources to challenge not only the seizure of his company’s assets but Mr. Putin’s power. Mr. Putin may also have an eye to presenting a positive image to the outside world ahead of the Winter Olympics, which start in the Russian city of Sochi on Feb. 7.

Freedom would represent a new, if uncertain, chapter for Mr. Khodorkovsky, who plunged from almost unimaginable wealth to a jail cell in the Karelia region near Finland, but still managed to maintain some visibility, including writing opinion articles for various newspapers and keeping a website, mostly detailing his case. With a fortune abroad that he managed to maintain after his arrest, Mr. Khodorkovsky could also have an opportunity to once again become

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INTERNATIONAL A4-14

Setback in Plan to Try Kenyan

An International Criminal Court prosecutor sought a delay in the case against Kenya’s president after the withdrawal of two witnesses left her with too little evidence to proceed. **PAGE A6**



Panic at a London Theater

Dozens of people were injured, some seriously, when part of the Apollo Theater’s ceiling fell during a sold-out performance in London. **PAGE A6**

NEW YORK A26-30

Deal on Tuition for Immigrants

Gov. Chris Christie backs allowing undocumented immigrants in New Jersey to pay in-state college rates. **PAGE A28**

NATIONAL A16-24

Choosing a Legacy on Spying

For President Obama, the proposed overhaul of surveillance operations poses a choice: Will he be the commander in chief many expected in 2008 or remain the one he became in 2009? The answer may define national security long after his term ends. **PAGE A20**

Methodists Split Over Gays

The defrocking of a Methodist minister for presiding at his son’s same-sex wedding has galvanized other clergy members to battle church teaching. **PAGE A16**

Senate Passes Pentagon Bill

The vote came after a last-minute agreement to vote on a small batch of President Obama’s nominees before the weekend. **PAGE A20**

BUSINESS DAY B1-12

Settlements in Credit Cases

Visa, MasterCard and American Express are moving away from policies that prevented merchants from charging credit customers more. **PAGE B1**

WEEKEND C1-34

Critics’ Picks

Michiko Kakutani, Janet Maslin and Dwight Garner share their favorite books for readers to savor. **PAGE C25**

SPORTSFRIDAY B13-18



Injury Raises New Doubts

Kobe Bryant, the longtime Los Angeles Lakers star, has an injured left knee — his second major leg injury this year. He is expected to miss six weeks, and the setback raises questions about how long Bryant, 35, can remain one of the top players in the N.B.A. **PAGE B13**

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A32-33

David Brooks

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